

THE KNICKERBOCKER CASE

A Report on the Current Crusade

MORRIS FREEDMAN

THERE is being acted out in New York, in a kind of slow motion, with great gaps between the significant scenes, a public drama with a cast which occasionally reaches into the thousands. Its ceremonial, almost ritual character, the solemnity of the actors and their often vigorously symbolical behavior, give it some of the qualities of an elaborate pageant. The opening curtain rose on April 9, 1945.

On that day, four members of the Romance Languages Department of the City College of New York sent a letter to the president of the College to be forwarded to the city's Board of Higher Education, on which sit the "trustees" of the institution. The four members were Elliot H. Pollinger, Ephraim Cross (both Jewish), Otto Müller, and Pedro Bach-y-Rita. Their letter asserted that "the Department has long been sharply divided into two opposing groups. The opponents of the Chairman [William E. Knickerbocker] for at least seven years have been subjected to continual harassment and what looks very much like discrimination. . . ." In a later letter, in answer to a request from the

Board, the complainants elaborated on their charge of discrimination. "Opponents of Professor Knickerbocker's regime," they wrote, "have been subject to such academic disadvantages as less desirable schedules, interference with outside studies, annoying class arrangements. . . ." The Board called upon the president of the College, Harry N. Wright, and the general faculty (all members with tenure) to hold "a prompt and complete investigation." On May 22, 1945, the Special Faculty Committee assigned to the investigation asked the complainants to submit evidence in support of their allegations. On September 27, 1945, some four months later, after several communications of a more or less unspecific nature had passed between the Committee and the complainants, the four instructors accused Professor Knickerbocker of anti-Semitism.

Thus began what has since come to be known as "The Knickerbocker Case." As soon as the charge of anti-Semitism was introduced, the original one of maladministration was all but forgotten. Repercussions resulting from the injection of the issue of anti-Semitism were immediate and widespread. The Faculty Committee conducted the first of several investigations. The Board of Higher Education itself, the New York City Council, and the American Jewish Congress, all launched inquiries. The New York State Commissioner of Education is now engaged in still another investigation, this one, it has been claimed by some of the participants in the case, of the Board of Higher Education's investigation. There have been two strikes at the College's uptown campus by students, one a sit-down, the other a walk-out that was described on the first day by some newspapers as a "near riot." A number of law-suits have been filed. Several lesser

THE "Knickerbocker Case," in which a professor at New York's City College has been accused of anti-Semitism, has been in the news, off and on, for a long time; students have walked out of their classrooms, charges and counter-charges by various individuals and organizations have filled the press—and yet the complex facts of the case are by no means well known, even to some of those most passionately committed. MORRIS FREEDMAN here attempts to unravel the tangled net in which those involved in the case have been caught, and to suggest some of the implications of this type of "social action" for the fight against anti-Semitism. Mr. Freedman was born in New York in 1920 and is a graduate of City College. He has contributed short stories and articles to a number of national magazines.

peripheral incidents have also taken place, somewhat more difficult to discern, like the circular ripples eddying out after a splash.

THE results of the early investigations, in which dozens and dozens of volumes of testimony and exhibits were gathered, had something for everybody. The Faculty Committee, consisting of two Jewish and two non-Jewish members, submitted a one hundred and twenty-five page report to the President in which it found no basis for the charges of anti-Semitism and suggested that the complainants themselves were guilty of misconduct in bringing such charges. It recommended to the President that disciplinary action be taken against them. (As yet, the President has done nothing to carry out this recommendation.) The Board of Higher Education, which contains several Jews, concluded after its own extensive examination that there was no basis for the charges of anti-Semitism and that the whole dispute "arose from factionalism and clashes of personality. . . ." The New York City Council, which has no immediate jurisdiction over the College, found Knickerbocker guilty of "reprehensible" behavior and suggested that he retire. The American Jewish Congress, which was interested in finding a legal basis for the removal of Knickerbocker, conducted a preliminary search of the facts and concluded at that time that there was insufficient evidence on which to base a legal action. (This study by the Congress, by the way, was not widely publicized.)

Knickerbocker was almost at once adjudged guilty by certain elements in the community at large. Most newspapers, though handling the story with kid gloves, generally seemed to favor Knickerbocker's accusers, perhaps because they were supplied with abundant copy by the complainants and their associates. Knickerbocker, the College administration, and the Board made few statements, and these were sparse and coldly official. The impression one got from some reports, mostly those in the Communist, "progressive" (of the Henry Wallace variety), and heavily Zionist-oriented press, was that a

vicious anti-Semite was loose on the faculty and was being shielded by the administration, itself probably anti-Semitic. Typical comments contributing to this impression were: ". . . the Board of Higher Education defends the racists . . ."; ". . . the Knickerbockers revelled and looked for new deeds of anti-Semitic derring-do." This wing of the press demanded the summary removal of Knickerbocker without trial, without appeal, and with no apparent consideration for his "civil rights." Individuals, Jews as well as Gentiles, who suggested that the case be studied more calmly, in the light of facts and other important considerations (such as, for instance, the problem of the best way of combatting anti-Semitism in this situation), were denounced as lick-spittles, cowards, toadies, belly-crawlers. Some Jewish organizations, ordinarily sensitive almost to the point of paranoia to intervention by religious denominations in secular schooling, found themselves intervening against Knickerbocker with a vengeance. Liberals, who as a rule jealously guard the academic provinces from trespassing politicians and pressure groups, found themselves ignoring their own prohibitions and trampling campus clover. High emotion reigned.

FROM the earliest days of the Knickerbocker case, "left-wing" groups (including Communists, near-Communists, and those significantly silent on the subject of Communism) have diligently worked on the matter. They have not had much enthusiastic student support. A demonstration against Knickerbocker at a basketball game in Madison Square Garden was denounced by many students. A sit-down strike in the Great Hall outside President Wright's office enlisted only a small minority. Hillel, prominent in the attempt to publicize the charge against Knickerbocker, refused at first to link the Knickerbocker case with that of William H. Davis, former administrator of Army Hall, a campus dormitory, who was accused of anti-Negro bias. The leftists kept joining the two affairs. (Davis admitted making an error of judgment in assigning Negro students to the

same rooms without asking them if this was what they wanted. He insisted that he was free of any prejudice. After a faculty investigation, he was removed from his post and re-assigned to teaching economics.) These left-wing organizations, which had their own reasons for wishing to stir up a fuss, were joined by certain Jewish groups whose notion of political action in a democracy is apparently that of a mindless, "militant" anti-Semitism. The instinctive protest of the latter, freed from the bonds of reason and responsibility, served well the ulterior motives of the former.

The real chance to connect Knickerbocker and Davis came when Judge Hubert T. Delaney, a Negro, resigned from an alumni investigating body, charging that the administration was actively protecting Knickerbocker and Davis. After a series of quick, complex parliamentary maneuvers, in which some saw the fine hand of the leftists, the student body of the uptown campus, in a referendum, approved by a vote of 2,797 to 1,885 a strike to force the immediate suspension of Knickerbocker and Davis pending an open trial. (The total enrollment at that particular center is about seven thousand.) It should be noted that, as a result of the vote, this strike was sponsored by the Student Council, which is in no way leftist. The evening session of the same campus joined the strikers. However, the School of Business Student Council, at 23rd Street, condemned the strike by an overwhelming vote.

The strike waned after the first day and petered out by the third, perhaps partly because of student antipathy to the proprietary way the leftists and their off-campus friends approached the strike. (A number of left-wing community and union groups, representing "citizen opinion," visited the campus to demand action of the President.) The strike accomplished almost nothing in relation to Knickerbocker and Davis, who are still teaching. It was claimed that the strike forced the State Commissioner of Education to agree to examine the handling of the Knickerbocker case, but the Commissioner's

examination had been going on for some time.*

Of course, the strike did bring the College once again into national prominence, but since it was impossible for the papers to describe the background of the strike in anything resembling its true complexity, it is difficult to say how or in what direction it affected the attitude of the country at large about either anti-Semitism or City College.

IT WAS perhaps natural that an accusation of anti-Semitism should turn out to be explosive—at this time, at this place. If Jews in America may be said to have a secular college, that institution is City College. From the time the sons and daughters of the immigrants of the turn of the century reached college age, the College has had a predominantly Jewish undergraduate body, something around seventy per cent. The presence of anti-Semites on the faculty of such an institution, especially after Hitler, would obviously strike most of the public as scandalous.

However, what has shocked many persons even more—persons who are no friends of anti-Semitism, inside and outside the College, Jews and Gentiles—was the crusading vengefulness with which the campaign against Knickerbocker was conducted. The impression that the complainants and their friends created was that when anti-Semitism is an issue, all normal judicial presumptions and processes may be suspended. Charges alone, to them, were sufficient grounds for the carrying out of sentence. In a letter to the Board, after they had appeared at only one hearing of the Faculty Committee, the complainants wrote: "We believe that we have revealed enough of the monster that has been gnawing the vitals of the City College for seven, to us, terrible years. We there-

* Actually the Commissioner is specifically looking into charges made by Pollinger and Bach-v-Rita that they have been removed from the departmental promotion list in violation of their legal rights. The two men were penalized by their department as the result of the Faculty Committee decision that they had behaved improperly in charging Knickerbocker with anti-Semitism.

fore ask . . . that the incriminated . . . be promptly brought to justice."

Crude forms of intimidation were used. Three students, not members of the class, entered one of Davis's courses on the first day of the semester, pretended to be members, asked Davis whether he was the man charged with anti-Negro bias, and, when he said yes, dramatically stalked out of the room. The student who led seventeen of the eighteen members out of one of Knickerbocker's sections, after a similar cross-examination, also was not registered in the class. One Jewish organization adopted the tone of the complainants and dismissed evidence indicating no anti-Semitism on the part of Knickerbocker as not "genuine." It also suggested that Knickerbocker be suspended for his own safety, put into protective custody as it were, because his presence on the campus was an element leading to unrest and student disturbance (to which, of course, this organization was contributing by its vigorous attacks on Knickerbocker and the administration). A number of student groups found themselves joining the hue and cry against Knickerbocker because, as one Jewish student leader put it: "We don't dare to be independent in this affair, however we may personally feel. They'd accuse us of being anti-Semitic and reactionary."

DURING all the turmoil, few stopped to inquire into the exact nature of Knickerbocker's supposed guilt. The charges against Knickerbocker were four: that he had discriminated against the Jewish complainants because of their Jewishness; that during his tenure he had recommended no Jews for more than trivial appointments (two substitutes for short periods, and an office assistant), although twenty-one non-Jews were hired; that he had caused a medal for proficiency in French to be withheld from a Jewish student, Morton Gurewitch, and had awarded it to a non-Jew with a record that could be interpreted as being slightly inferior; that he had made "oral statements derogatory to or showing bias against the Jewish people."

The first charge was disposed of when it was shown that the other Jewish members in the Department had on the whole received as good if not better treatment than their non-Jewish colleagues. As for the second charge, it would be difficult to saddle Knickerbocker with exclusive responsibility for the non-hiring of Jews, since, in theory, a democratically chosen appointments committee selects instructors. In addition, one would have to prove that a substantial number of Jews did apply during this period, and that they were at least as competent as the non-Jews who were hired. The case of the French medal is tangled up in a clerical and statistical web. Morton Gottschall, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Science, a Jew, testified that the medal was not awarded to Gurewitch because of a recording error in his office. It has been claimed, however, that Gurewitch should have received the medal on the basis of his record up to the time of the error, and also that he would not have been awarded it even without the error. (A duplicate medal was recently awarded to Gurewitch as a direct result of the City Council investigation. According to the papers, Gurewitch didn't even bother to acknowledge the delayed honor.) At any rate, the matter of the medal cannot clearly be laid at Knickerbocker's door, although some of the complainants have intimated that Dean Gottschall was covering up for Knickerbocker. The charge that remains, therefore, is the one about making anti-Semitic remarks and jokes.

One of the oddest angles of a case in which there are so many queer angles is that the principal witness to bring this charge was Professor Otto Müller, one of the complainants, who had himself long been regarded, in corridor conversation, as being something less than an enemy of anti-Semitism. (No section of the press friendly to Knickerbocker's opponents mentions this aspect of Müller's past.) Up to the time that Knickerbocker failed to back him for promotion to a full professorship, Müller was Knickerbocker's supporter and close friend.

He admitted to the Board's committee that he had joined the complainants to "sabotage" Knickerbocker's regime.

Müller testified that Knickerbocker used the term "kike" frequently, that he referred often to "those Jews and their by-laws" (the by-laws of the Board of Higher Education granting certain democratic rights to faculty members, such as the right to select their own departmental chairmen and committees at periodic intervals, the right of tenure, and so on; it is these rights, among other things, that make teaching at City College so attractive to many men), that he had stated "Hitler was all right when he attacked the Jews . . .," and had told Müller this joke during the war: "The Battle Hymn of the Jews is 'Onward, Christian soldiers, we'll make the uniforms.'"

Under the circumstances, Müller hardly appeared to be the best witness to another's anti-Semitism. His word seemed, to the Board of Higher Education, to be no more credible than Knickerbocker's, and Knickerbocker denied most of the charges. Müller's presence in the ranks of the complainants also somewhat vitiated the affidavits submitted by a few others to Professor Cross alleging that they had heard Knickerbocker make nasty remarks about Jews. (None of the three other complainants, including Professor Cross, the most vigorous proponent of the charge of anti-Semitism, testified to ever hearing anti-Semitic comments from Knickerbocker.) This is the kind of remark Knickerbocker is supposed to have made to the men who gave affidavits to Cross: "These students are different. More than two-thirds of the students are Jewish. They are always trying to put something over; they have no respect for authority and you can't treat them like gentlemen."

ONE man closely connected with the College put his dilemma concerning the evidence of anti-Semitism on Knickerbocker's part this way: "Müller was accepted by the foes of anti-Semitism in the case as an ally, apparently only on his word, in spite of his not unambiguous reputation. Now Knick-

erbocker declared to the Board's Committee: 'I may have said that there are Jews, and I may have added Christians, who cannot be treated as gentlemen, but to say that most of them are "cheap Jews" and that they cannot be treated as gentlemen, is contrary to any belief I have ever possessed.' It is true that Knickerbocker admitted to the Board's committee that he heard and repeated the obnoxious joke about the Battle Hymn of the Jews, although he said he believed it was first told to him by Müller when they were still cronies. But, in the absence of conclusive evidence to the contrary, it would seem that Knickerbocker's word on whether or not he is anti-Semitic is at least as good as his accuser's.

"But suppose that the charges of Knickerbocker's making unpleasant remarks about Jews were absolutely true, what then? It has not been claimed that he made any offensive remarks to Jews themselves. It has not been satisfactorily proved that his remarks and his ideas resulted in any discriminatory actions. Has a man the right, the democratic or merely human right, to *think* thoughts derogatory to Jews on occasion, even to speak so in the company of like-minded persons? Offhand, one might say so, although obviously City College is hardly the most congenial place for a man who follows such a pattern consistently."

It was apparently on the basis of such considerations that Hillel in the early stages of the discussion urged merely that Knickerbocker resign from the chairmanship of his department and possibly retire altogether from the faculty on his regular pension. In the eyes of many, the most Knickerbocker seems to be demonstrably guilty of in relation to anti-Semitism is indiscretion in bringing his sentiments into the College, even if only to men like Müller. Of course, the charge of maladministration still remains.

MANY associates of the College considered the charges against Knickerbocker ironic, for it is common knowledge that the faculty has had, and still has, men who have been much more outspokenly anti-

Jewish. One professor on his retirement issued a violently anti-Semitic blast opposing the appointment of a refugee Jew in his department. An instructor, while apparently under the influence of liquor, was heard to remark loudly in a public bus: "The best damned thing that ever happened to America was when that Jew in the White House, Rosenfeld, died." Then there are the men who used to make comments that in their unqualified baldness struck many as being anti-Jewish but were really only foolish. One teacher, intending his question as a joke, used to challenge students with non-Jewish names: "What was your name before it was Roberts? Rabinowitz?" Another professor, very amiable and widely beloved, used to tell unruly Jewish students that he would define for them, with reference to courtesy, the difference between a "sheenie" and a Jew. (Incidentally, no evidence was offered of Knickerbocker ever making such remarks in class, although he is reputed to be a martinet and is supposed to fail more than the usual average of students.)

Instances of this kind can probably be multiplied. But the College has over the years worked out its own informal methods, no doubt not quite perfect, for dealing with such phenomena. The genuine anti-Semites on the faculty, who are probably in a negligible minority (how does one make a census of anti-Semites in America?) are tagged, if mildly tolerated, and can hope for little in the way of advancement. Other men who have made foolish slips of the tongue have been reproved and even punished. One prominent professor was transferred from the main campus to the business school (occasionally used as a kind of Siberia) after a quite meaningless remark of this kind. When an alumni committee recently visited the College after much preparatory publicity to hear evidence of bias on the faculty, it had to abandon its investigation because no one showed up to testify.

THE city at large has reacted to the Knickerbocker mess with a certain discomfort, both because of the issue of anti-Semitism

and because the College was once again in the news. Jewish groups that could not automatically align themselves with those demanding Knickerbocker's summary dismissal were embarrassed. If one took a stand for Knickerbocker's right not to be fired, it was possible to be accused of anti-Semitism regardless of whether one happened to be a Jew oneself; if one opposed his right to teach, it was possible to be accused of succumbing to a lynch spirit. This general confusion caused one prominent newspaper to straddle the issue editorially, suggesting to the students that Knickerbocker had been punished sufficiently (for what crime it did not say) by all of the publicity and that they should not "demand their pound of flesh" by insisting on his removal. Many persons, caught in the ever thickening web of developments, were completely bewildered. (One contribution toward chaos was the initiation during the height of the case of a movement to ban the *Merchant of Venice* and *Oliver Twist* from city classrooms.) Others who felt that something certainly had to be done about anti-Semitism of whatever sort on the faculty were unconvinced that the tactics adopted were exactly those that would bring meaningful results. For enemies of the principle of free higher education were quick to use the case as another reason to close down the College, on the basis of a logic that was apparently two-edged: both because there were anti-Semites on the faculty and because students protested against them. Certainly, the College's aspirations in budgetary matters, particularly its present desire to enlarge its physical holdings by buying the near-by Manhattanville College campus and buildings for three million dollars, were made considerably more difficult of realization.

The College's curious place in the community was at the root of some of the peculiarities of the Knickerbocker case. The College is the only major institution of its kind in the country to be supported entirely by a municipality. For many years, the College has been enriching the city, the state, and the nation with its graduates—teachers, doc-

tors, engineers, statesmen. Yet it has long been handled as an orphan by the city, enjoying only a begrudged marginal existence. (Under Mayor O'Dwyer, who has a prominent alumnus in his administration, conditions have improved somewhat.) Its graduates have been subjected, often by College officials, to constant reminders of their debt for having received a free college education. During its early history, City College was an important instrument in the "Americanization" (inevitably paternalistic) of the immigrant and his children; though that era has long since passed, many members of the faculty and administration tend to keep at a patronizing distance from the students and to speak in accents of condescension. Not long ago, alumni received requests for donations to the College's Centennial Fund that seemed to imply an obligation on their part to pay back the "charity" they had received.

THE city's attitude has been in part responsible for the gulf that exists between students and faculty. As in the conventional state treatment of orphans generally, the city asks, in return for the shelter it gives the College, only that it not be a nuisance. Thus controversial appointments, for one thing, are usually out of the question. And since men of academic stature often have independent and original minds, sure to offend someone if only crackpots, the College has usually tried to play safe and has hired or built up perfectly inoffensive personages. This state of feeling has been especially prominent ever since the disgraceful exhibition that kept Bertrand Russell from joining the faculty. (A substantial section of the faculty, by the way, put up a vigorous fight for Russell.) As a corollary of this general principle of caution, it has been felt by certain elements in the College that those of its own graduates who wish to join the faculty are less to be depended on to fit into the pattern than, say, mid-Westerners.

The composition of the faculty has long been such as to give the erroneous impression of being the result of active anti-Semitism. For example, although four students out of

five are Jewish—to use the general estimate, which may be slightly conservative—only about one instructor out of every five is Jewish.* About the same proportion appears among administrative officials. But the small number of Jews may be explained by a variety of reasons. For one thing, in company with other institutions, the College has generally followed a policy of not "inbreeding." Naturally, such a policy has operated to keep Jews off the faculty, since no other college in the country graduates so many Jews as does City. (However, it is probably also true that no other college in the country has such a high proportion of Jews on its faculty as does City.) The College is periodically overtaken by a will-o-the-wisp wish to "go native" along the pattern of a rah-rah state university. Graduates of such institutions are sought after, and press releases concentrate on sports, co-ed activities, freshman-sophomore conflicts, slapstick human interest, and the like; generally neglected is what has made the College famous: its intellectual richness. Another reason for the scarcity of Jews is that until recently there have not been many Jews qualified to teach in the College—the PhD, which is required by law, is costly, both in time and money.

Whatever the explanation, there exists a serious alienation between students and the men responsible for their education. (There was once a dean of students, a Southerner, who greeted all undergraduates who came to him with problems—usually at the beginning of the term, in connection with registration—by pulling out a roll of bills and genially drawling, "Sure, son, anything to

*The Teachers Union, which is leftist-oriented, recently issued some startling statistics purporting to show that while most Jewish teachers on probation were not being taken on with tenure, almost all non-Jewish probationers were. While the figures seem to be authentic, two comments must be made about them. First, the four departments on which the statistics are based were selected, perhaps precisely to obtain these statistics. Also, the College has been appointing young Jewish teachers almost in droves before they have completed all their academic requirements. Since many cannot finish their doctoral work before their probation is over, they must, by the letter of the law, be let go. Their places may be filled by other Jewish young men.

help. How much do you need?") One non-alumnus instructor, who has established a warm rapport with his students, once commented sardonically to a colleague that the teachers at the College are looked upon with contempt by the top-heavy administration because they must maintain contact with classes. Faculty members are often "rewarded" by being assigned to non-teaching posts which do not necessarily carry more pay. It has even happened in some departments that instructors, alumni and non-alumni, became suspect and endangered their chances for promotion when it was learned that they were popular with their students.

ALTHOUGH something of the genesis and the development of the Knickerbocker case may be found in this chasm between the students and their teachers, the strike and the public eruption of the case seem rather traceable to the almost total estrangement of the *administration* and the students.

Throughout the preparations for the strike, the administration made no serious attempt to head it off by vigorously presenting its position. It is true that the President held regular open forums in his office, and that Dean John Theobald kept his door open to all comers to answer questions, but only a handful of students were reached in this way. In class discussions during and after the strike, it came out that most students were uninformed and misinformed about the issues and facts of the Knickerbocker case, having got much of their knowledge and many of their attitudes from the very vocal left-wing groups or from the garbled and superficial accounts in the rest of the press. The administration's infrequent public statements merely reiterated the bare facts: that Knickerbocker and Davis had been duly tried; that Knickerbocker had been found innocent; and that Davis had been sufficiently punished by removal from his Army Hall post. (So far as can be determined, the administration has still made no satisfactory statement on its approval of a raise in salary for Davis—almost fourteen hundred dollars annually—after he had been removed from

his administrative job. Of course, Davis took a loss in pay, something around three thousand dollars, when he was sent back to teaching. But, many ask, if his transfer was in the nature of a punishment, why was almost half of his salary-cut restored? It has been suggested that Davis was known not to be guilty at the time of his removal but that the atmosphere at the moment demanded a "fall guy," and that the salary increment was partial compensation for his having had to assume such a role.)

After the strike started, the attitude of the administration and some members of the faculty was akin to the by now largely outmoded attitude of the management of a large corporation which assumes in a strike that it is at "war" with its employees, with whom it has no common interest. At a general faculty meeting, one dean urged that the administration refuse to discuss the issues with the students until they called off their strike and returned to classes. Other faculty members insisted that the "kids" were merely using the strike as an opportunity to play hookey—a comment that could only be made by a visitor from Mars about City College students. Wildly exaggerated stories were spread of students and alumni being summarily fired when employers read about the strike.

ANY public matter as involved as the Knickerbocker case inevitably brings to light a number of individuals who otherwise might have remained in obscurity. The man who achieved a veritable apotheosis in this case was Professor Ephraim Cross, without whose presence the machinery of the Knickerbocker case might never have been set in motion and kept in motion. He acted as a whip throughout and issued one of the more remarkable documents in the case, which is saying a good deal.

In a sense, Cross's whole previous experience was a preparation for his current role. According to the Board's report, during the sixteen years he worked as a teacher in the city's high schools, he made numerous complaints, "some threatening grave

charges." Soon after he came to City College in 1931 as an instructor, he was at odds with Knickerbocker's predecessor in office, Professor Felix Weill (who was Jewish), charging "tyranny," "dictatorship," and "oppression." During this period he worked actively for increased democracy in school affairs, especially for a greater voice by the faculty in running itself. He wrote eloquent, passionate letters to the newspapers on the subject. (The obvious irony, of course, is that Cross is largely protesting today against a democratically-elected chairman and a democratically-elected appointments committee, neither of which recommended him for promotion.) His early activities after Knickerbocker became chairman consisted of frequent attempts to get a faculty investigation of the Romance Languages Department. According to the Board, he offered no specific grounds for holding such an investigation. When the acting president, Nelson P. Mead, turned down his requests for an inquiry, Cross began gathering, from men who had had contact with Knickerbocker, affidavits to prove Knickerbocker's anti-Semitism, which he went around showing secretly. He soon formed a junta with other disaffected members of the department, men like Bach-y-Rita, for instance, who felt that his promotion was long overdue, and Elliot Pollinger, who once opposed Knickerbocker in a departmental election, coming within one vote of himself being chairman, and who had since not been promoted although recommended by Knickerbocker.

Currently, Cross is distributing, often in person in the College's lunchrooms and recreation centers, a small booklet aping the Board's report. The booklet is supposed to have been prepared by Otto Müller and Cross, but it bears the heavy mark of Cross's individual polemical style. It is in many ways an intriguing document. The booklet spends much time in making meticulous corrections in the Board's spelling of names and in its references to professorial titles. The president is regularly referred to, in asides, as a man who spends his vacations

at a "restricted" resort. But the most interesting parts of the booklet are those describing the roles of the various Jews on the faculty who associated themselves with Knickerbocker.

One of the Jews who testified for Knickerbocker declared at one time, according to the booklet: "Every Christian is anti-Semitic. All you are doing is uncovering one more anti-Semite. . . . I am a Jew and intensely Jewish and I find anti-Semitism in every Christian. . . . I take it for granted." Another man, now an important administrator in the College, who also testified for Knickerbocker, was reported to have said to Pollinger after what looked like a particularly flagrant exhibition by Knickerbocker of favoritism toward non-Jews: "Elliot, this is a Christian world. From now on I support Knickerbocker." A Jew, an associate of Knickerbocker's in the Romance Languages Department, testified, according to Cross's booklet, both that he never "felt that there was any feeling towards me or any Jews in the department because they were Jews" and that he believed Müller was anti-Semitic. According to Cross, this man also had frequently remarked to him that "all Christians are anti-Semites."

It is hard to say exactly what Cross and Müller had in mind when they published this material. If they were trying to discredit the testimony of these men, they were obviously undermining their own charges even more. Not only were these allegedly anti-Gentile Jews able to work in harmony with Knickerbocker, but they were even favored by him, according to the booklet. It almost seems as if the booklet were addressing itself directly to Knickerbocker and taunting him, "See what kind of people your supporters are, see what they really think of you."

The general situation of other Jews on the faculty was and still is, of course, a tricky one. Few sympathize with Cross, but it is widely assumed that Knickerbocker is not exactly a good friend of the Jews, even if nothing could specifically be proved against him. It has been said that Cross's leadership

of the complainants alienated a good number of faculty members from supporting the movement against Knickerbocker. One prominent Jewish professor, in another department, who had been a colleague of Knickerbocker's for many years and had the usual colleague's acquaintance with him, was heard to remark publicly and loudly to Knickerbocker: "Knickerbocker, you old fool, why don't you retire and end the whole mess?" Most faculty members have remained quiet, agreeing generally with the strategy of the administration in handling the situation, if not with every tactic. Morton Gottschall, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Science, is obviously in the most exposed position. Cross has implied that he is a renegade because he has stood fast with the administration, and that he has yielded to pressure from his superiors in opposition to his natural feelings. At the same time, it has been rumored that Gottschall has been instrumental in keeping from further advancement certain men with much seniority who are noted for their anti-Jewish remarks.

THE Knickerbocker case is still not settled and like all such things probably never will be. For the record, the State Commissioner of Education still remains to be heard from. No matter what his decision, there is sure to be further litigation and discussion and agitation. Some day, the official juggling of the case will have to come to an end, but the undercurrents that have been stirred into motion will probably remain strong for a long time after, perhaps never to subside. They have already made themselves felt in the normal course of the College's affairs. There are rumors that a number of men, some prominent, some unimportant, are planning to leave the College; one man of some importance has already done so. Some feel, the story goes, that the College has lost prestige because of the inept, bumbling way the Knickerbocker case was handled and because of the College's policy of not encouraging distinction in any field. A perverse fear of anti-Gentilism is making its wispy way through the offices. After a

recent departmental election for chairman in which the man who was backed by most of the Jews in the department was elected (he himself happens not to be Jewish), supporters of the defeated candidate expressed a serious worry that "their days were numbered" and advised non-Jewish supporters of the new chairman that they had committed suicide in the College.

On the other hand, two Jewish men who have not been re-hired for the next academic year have been loudly and publicly declaring that, after all, no other attitude could be expected toward "Jewish progressives" from an administration which shields Knickerbocker and Davis. They have received support and encouragement from quite a few organizations, ranging from the Civil Rights Congress (on the Attorney General's "subversive" list) to the American Jewish Congress. Their protests have already forced the department of one of them to issue a circumspect statement to the effect that he was not being reappointed because of his inability to work harmoniously with his colleagues and his insistence on subordinating his work to outside politics. Generally, no reason is announced when a man is not reappointed, lest his future career be harmed; the wisdom of this principle is unassailable. The City College Alumni Association and the Board of Higher Education have just issued statements, following investigations, declaring that they "deplore" and "condemn" the raising of the false issue of anti-Semitic bias as the reason for not appointing these two men with tenure.

Perhaps the most dangerous result of the Knickerbocker case is the suggestion that has been advanced in some quarters that enough Jews be hired to bring their quota on the College faculty up to some such standard as, for instance, the percentage of Jews in the city. (Cross himself has been claiming credit for the sudden upsurge in the number of Jews who have been hired since the case started, at the same time declaring that the administration is only "covering up" its anti-Semitism by this maneuver. The increase may simply be due to the fact that more

Jews than ever are around to be hired, the GI bill having made advanced study possible for many who otherwise couldn't have afforded it.) Why the criterion shouldn't be either the percentage of Jews in the College (which would raise the quota to eighty per cent) or the percentage in the country at large (which would get rid of all but a handful), it is impossible to say, since either extreme can be argued with equal cogency once the premise of the need of a quota is accepted. Obviously, hiring Jews on the ground of their Jewishness can as little be condoned as firing them or not hiring them for the same reason.

BEFORE the war, the Knickerbocker case, or any controversy involving anti-Semitism at the College, could never have achieved such virulence. (Knickerbocker himself has spent almost half a century at the College.) Then, students shrugged off open anti-Semitic remarks as coming from fools. The professor who used to define a "sheenie" was never caught up on his use of the term until just recently. (So solid was his reputation in the College as a good and noble soul, a reputation achieved among a predominantly Jewish student body and alumni group, that publication of the event was quashed by the students themselves.) Undergraduates with ambitions for university careers learned not to be sanguine about the possibility of appointments to the College in certain departments. (It should be remarked that two of the largest departments in the College, history and English, have not exercised a *numerus clausus* in the appointment of Jews.) Jewish students accepted the existence of anti-Semitism as another of the dismal appurtenances of the College that had to be contended with, like the dirty cellar lunchroom and the filthy washrooms. It is only today, against the background of the newsreels of Buchenwald, that many have come to feel that anti-Semitism is something one must automatically "crush" whenever the opportunity offers, without the ex-

ercise of the usual precautions of logic and good sense.

Unfortunately, the taking of sides in the Knickerbocker case has been for many persons, students and non-students, too easy, too merely emotional a matter. The vigorous protest that had to be made against anti-Semitism, especially after Hitler, a protest which for many had somehow never adequately been made, was directed against the person of Knickerbocker, and Knickerbocker—so it would seem—became a symbolic victim who had to be "destroyed." More than one observer has remarked on the irony of the Jews themselves falling into the practice of ritual "scapegoating," of which they have so often been the victim.

AS ONE thoughtful Jewish community leader put it: "The more one looks at such crusades as the Knickerbocker case, the more one is impressed with their lack of realistic relation to any presumed objective, whether it be to right some specific wrong against Jews or to create a favorable public climate for the elimination, on a broad front, of anti-Jewish prejudice or discriminatory practices. In the hue and cry of the play 'war,' truth and justice get lost early in the no-man's-ground between the two loyalist 'armies.' To be sure, such 'cases' provide a thrilling drama in which participants and spectators can purge themselves of pent-up conflicting emotions. But unhappily these 'militant' binges may prove an exceedingly expensive form of self-indulgence. There are boomerang effects. Mob spirit undermines academic and civic safeguards and liberties; individuals can be hurt, and academic institutions likewise, by irresponsible accusations; liberal interests and causes can be exploited by self-seeking leftwing and Jewish chauvinist organizations; the repute and good faith of all organizations devoted to combating prejudice may be seriously undermined; and the necessary long-range struggle against anti-Semitism can find itself diverted into wasteful and unprofitable channels."